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DEPARTMENT FOR DRL/MLGA KRISTEN MCGEENY

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SUBJECT: FRANCE - COUNTER TORTURE INITIATIVES

REF: STATE 70129

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: France actively supports efforts to prevent torture and protect victims through membership in international conventions and participation in regional initiatives, according to MFA assistant director for human rights and humanitarian affairs Cecile Vigneau and deputy assistant director Emmanuel Pineda who spoke to poloffs on July 30 in response to refel demarche. Pineda underscored the importance of American leadership in the effort to combat torture and urged the United States to sign and ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. France also supports the work of non-governmental organizations in activities aimed at preventing torture and protecting victims. END SUMMARY

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS

¶2. (SBU) France signed the United Nations Convention against Torture (CAT) in 1985 and ratified the document in 1986. The GOF has also been a signatory member of the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT) since 2005. By ratifying the OPCAT in 2008, France accepted an additional layer of scrutiny by creating a complementary system of national and international visiting mechanisms to inspect prisons and detention facilities.

¶3. (SBU) Pineda also noted that France signed the not yet into force International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance in 2007 and ratified the convention in 2008. He encouraged the USG to support the convention, which remains seven signatures short of implementation. He stated that the GOF actively supports the work of UN Special Mechanisms such as the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Manfred Nowak.

EUROPEAN UNION INITIATIVES

¶4. (SBU) Vigneau asserted that France is firmly committed to the prohibition of torture as expressed through the political commitment adopted by all European Union member states in 2001 through the EU Guidelines on Torture. She stressed that as a member of the Council of Europe, France has ratified the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which provides for visits to places of detention (including prisons, police stations, army barracks, psychiatric hospitals) by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT). In addition, Vigneau described separate initiatives that the GOF funds annually through the UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture and the European Instrument for European Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR).

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ACTION

15. (SBU) Pineda mentioned that the GOF supports the work of the French chapters of international NGOs in Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. However, he said that the most active and highly regarded non-governmental organization in France committed to protecting victims and fighting torture in country and abroad is Actions by Christians for the Abolition of Torture (ACAT). Founded in 1974, ACAT works to resettle and seek asylum in France for over 200 victims of torture.

PEKALA